

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 BANGKO 07153 020237Z

ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03
NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06
AID-05 TRSY-02 IO-13 /075 W
-----021158Z 022515 /11

R 011055Z APR 77

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 743

INFO DIA WASHDC

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 7153

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, PINT, TH

SUBJ: MARCH 26 COUP ATTEMPT

REF: A) BKK 6778, B) BKK 6627, C) BKK 6587, D) BKK 6584,
E) DAO IR6-895-0122-77

1. SUMMARY: COUP ATTEMPT LED BY GEN. CHALAT HIRANYASIRI
FAILED BECAUSE KEY ARMY GENERALS DID NOT JOIN HIM IN THE
COUP ATTEMPT. CHALAT'S MOTIVATION
FOR COUP ATTEMPT AT THIS TIME UNCLEAR. OTHER PARTICIPANTS
OR SUPPORTERS OF COUP ATTEMPT NOT YET KNOWN ALTHOUGH
MG PRAMAN ADIREKSAN AND MC CHATCHAI CHUNHAWAN ARE
UNIVERSALLY SUSPECTED OF SOME COMPLICITY. PMAC AND THANIN
CABINET PROBABLY STRENGTHENED IN SHORT RUN, BY SUCCESSFUL
FOILING OF COUP ATTEMPT. END OF SUMMARY.

1. THE DETAILS OF WHAT HAPPENED ON MAR 26 HAVE BEEN
REPORTED IN EMBASSY REFTELS AND IN THE DAO REPORT
(REF. E) ON THE COUP ATTEMPT. THE BAREBONE FACTS
ARE AS FOLLOWS: GEN. CHALAT HIRANYASIRI, FORMER
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 BANGKO 07153 020237Z

DEPUTY COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OF THE ROYAL THAI ARMY,
ATTEMPTED A COUP D'ETAT, ASSISTED BY HIS SON, THREE
OTHER FIELD GRADE OFFICERS, 300 MEN OF THE 9TH DIVISION
IN KANCHANABURI PROVINCE, A HANDFUL OF SOLDIERS OF THE
1ST DIVISION IN BANGKOK, AND AN UNKNOWN NUMBER OF OTHER
PERSONS. THE COUP GROUP SEIZED CONTROL OF FOUR KEY
MILITARY AND VIVILIAN INSTALLATIONS WITH EASE, HELD

TWO RANKING ARMY OFFICERS "HOSTAGE" AND KILLED ANOTHER. THEY ALMOST SEIZED GEN. SOEM NA NAKHON, RTA COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF. THE COUP FAILED BECAUSE THE COUP GROUP WAS ISOLATED, NONE OF THE KEY ARMY GENERALS JOINED IN THE COUP ATTEMPT. DAO REPORTED IN REF. E THAT THE POTENTIAL FOR SUCCESSFUL COUP WOULD HAVE BEEN ENHANCED IF THE COUP PLOTTER HAD SEIZED GEN. SOEM AND HAD NOT KILLED GEN. ARUN.

2. WHY CHALAT ATTEMPTED A COUP IS THE SUBJECT OF AMULTITUDE OF THESES, MANY OF WHICH ARE OUTLINED IN REF. E, NONE OF WHICH WE CAN DEFINITELY ASSESS AT THIS TIME. CHALAT WAS VERY AMBITIOUS AND WIDELY ACKNOWLEDGED TO HAVE ACTIVELY PARTICIPATED IN COUP PLOTS OVER THE LAST SEVERAL YEARS. HE HAD BEEN THWARTED IN HIS ATTEMPT TO BE IN LINE FOR THE RTG COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF POSITION WHEN HE WAS REMOVED BY THE NEWLY INSTALLED SENI GOVERNMENT FROM THE POST OF DEPUTY COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OF THE RTA TO WHICH HE HAD BEEN UNEXPECTEDLY PROMOTED IN APR 1976 BY THEN MINISTER OF DEFENSE MG PRAMAN ADIREKSAN. SHORTLY AFTER THE OCT. 6, 1976 COUP, THE NATIONAL ADMINISTRATIVE REFORM COUNCIL (NARC) PLACED HIM ON RESERVE STATUS BECAUSE HE WAS SUSPECTED OF COUNTER-COUP PLOTTING. SOON THEREAFTER CHALAT BECAME A MONK AND TRAVELLED WIDELY TO VARIOUS MILITARY INSTALLATIONS, GIVING HIM A GOOD OPPORTUNITY TO SEEK SUPPORT FOR A COUP ATTEMPT.

3. WHO ELSE WAS INVOLVED IN THE COUP ATTEMPT IS DIFFICULT TO ASCERTAIN AT THIS TIME. DAO SOURCES ARE CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 BANGKO 07153 020237Z

CONVINCED THAT NEITHER PRAPHAT CHARUSATHIAN NOR THANOM KITTIKHACHON, FORMER STRONGMEN WHO WERE FORCED INTO EXILE IN 1973 AND WHO ONLY RECENTLY RETURNED TO THAILAND, WERE INVOLVED IN THE ATTEMPT. GEN. PRASOET'S INVOLVEMENT IN THE ATTEMPT IS COVERED IN REF. E.

4. MANY STRONGLY SUSPECT MG PRAMAN ADIREKSAN, LEADER OF THE NOW DEFUNCT THAI NATION PARTY AND HIS BROTHER-IN-LAW, MG CHATCHAI CHUNHAWAN, PROVIDED AT LEAST HEAVY FINANCIAL SUPPORT TO CHALAT. CHATCHAI AND CHALAT ARE CLOSE ASSOCIATES; BOTH CHATCHAI AND PRAMAN HAVE BEEN ASSOCIATED WITH CHALAT IN THE RECENT PAST. IT WAS PRAMAN, THEN DEFENSE MINISTER, WHO IN THE LAST DAYS OF THE LAME-DUCK KHUKRIT GOVERNMENT, PROMOTED CHALAT TO THE POST OF DEPUTY COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OF THE RTA.

5. CHALAT COULD NOT HAVE EXPECTED TO PULL OFF A SUCCESSFUL COUP WITHOUT SUPPORT OF AT LEAST SOME

RTA GENERALS IN KEY POSITIONS AND WOULD NOT HAVE ATTEMPTED A COUP WITHOUT SOME ASSURANCES OF THEIR SUPPORT. CERTAIN GENERALS PROBABLY WERE APPROACHED AND INDICATED THAT THEY WOULD SUPPORT CHALAT ON THE CONDITION THAT CHALAT GET CERTAIN OTHER GENERALS ON BOARD AND PROVIDED ADEQUATE PAYMENTS. THESE ASSURANCES OF SUPPORT WERE PROBABLY MADE THROUGH AIDES OR GO-BETWEENS AND HENCE PRACTICALLY UNPROVABLE. PMAC LEADERS MAY ALSO SO CIRCUMSCRIBE THE SCOPE OF THE ON-GOING INVESTIGATIONS THAT ONLY A FEW OF THOSE INVOLVED IN THE MAR 26 COUP ATTEMPT, AND NONE OF THE PRINCIPAL SUPPORTERS, WILL BE UNCOVERED AND BROUGHT TO TRIAL.

6. THE EMBASSY BELIEVES THAT THE SUCCESSFUL FOILING OF THE COUP ATTEMPT HAS STRENGTHENED THE PRIME MINISTER'S ADVISORY COUNCIL (PMAC) IN THE SHORT RUN. THE MEMBERS OF THE PMAC HUNG TOGETHER WELL IN FACE OF A DANGEROUS CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 BANGKO 07153 020237Z

CHALLENGE A SERIOUS TROUBLEMAKER AND EMINENT COUP PLOTTER HAS BEEN EFFECTIVELY ELIMINATED. IT ALSO APPEARS THAT RTA COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAS ENHANCED HIS IMAGE AND HIS PRESTIGE AMONG THE MILITARY AND THE PUBLIC AT LARGE FOR HIS COOL, DECISIVE HANDLING OF THE SITUATION. THIS IN TURN HAS STRENGTHENED THE HAND OF THE SANGAT-KAMON-KRIANGSAK-SOEM GROUP IN THE RULING PMAC. THE EMBASSY ALSO BELIEVES THAT THE ATTEMPT MAY HAVE PROVIDED THE THANIN CABINET WITH A LITTLE MORE BREATHING ROOM. THE SANGAT GROUP, REALIZING THAT A MAJOR RESHUFFLE OF THE CIVILIAN CABINET SOON AFTER A COUP ATTEMPT WOULD WORSEN THE INVESTMENT CLIMATE AND PROJECT AN IMAGE OF AN EVER UNSTABLE THAI GOVERNMENT, MAY DECIDE TO POSTPONE ANY PLANNED RESHUFFLE.

WHITEHOUSE

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: GOVERNMENT OVERTHROW, PLOTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 01-Apr-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977BANGKO07153
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770114-0527
Format: TEL
From: BANGKOK
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t197704100/aaaadizq.tel
Line Count: 155
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: a1ecb39b-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 10-Jan-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2662879
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: MARCH 26 COUP ATTEMPT
TAGS: PGOV, PINT, TH
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/a1ecb39b-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009